



Testimony of Eric Gjede
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Before the Labor & Public Employees Committee
Hartford, CT
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Testifying on
HB 6862: AN ACT CONCERNING BROADBAND CONSTRUCTION AND THE PREVAILING WAGE

Good afternoon, Senator Kushner, Representative Sanchez, Senator Sampson, Representative Ackert and members of the Labor & Public Employees Committee. My name is Eric Gjede and I am vice president of public policy for CBIA, the Connecticut Business & Industry Association. CBIA is Connecticut's largest business organization, with thousands of member companies, small and large, representing a diverse range of industries from across the state. Ninety-five percent of our member companies are small businesses with less than one hundred employees.

CBIA opposes HB 6862.

Connecticut employers, particularly small businesses, continue to face a multitude of challenges. Most businesses have seen operating costs increase due to supply chain issues and inflation. An astounding 80% of businesses continue to face workforce issues. Our state's unemployment rate remains higher than the national average, and employers face looming tax increases in the coming months related to federal unemployment loans. We have also been consistently ranked by national surveys as one of the most expensive places to live and run a business.

Despite our challenges, Connecticut has a unique advantage in that it is home to major broadband providers. These providers help level the playing field and compete in the digital economy versus other states because of our world class broadband infrastructure. This infrastructure allows our state's employees to work from home and Connecticut companies to win business far beyond its borders. In fact, Connecticut has twice been ranked the second-best state for broadband in a row in an annual study conducted by broadbandnow.com.

CBIA opposes HB 6862 because it proposes burdensome mandates, selection criteria, and reporting requirements that will unnecessarily lengthen the project timelines for completing broadband infrastructure projects in our state. Further, it would put barriers in place that will undermine the continued deployment of broadband infrastructure and threaten the state's ability to maintain its advantage in the digital economy.

We need infrastructure policies that encourages our state to maintain its leadership in broadband, not slow it down with unnecessary and cumbersome reporting, disclosures mandates, and complicated selection criteria.

For these reasons, we urge the committee to take no action on HB 6862.